



# The **Fiery** Bones

Jeremiah 20:9

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Text

Jeremiah 50:1-46

Topic

Warfare rages in which God reveals Himself as the Redeemer to either deliver those who repent or to destroy those who rebel

Title

*"Immortal Combat"*

## Introduction

Some of you fans of Westerns might remember a particularly poignant scene from the 1989 miniseries, *Lonesome Dove*. The two aging Texas Rangers were forced to take time away from their historic cattle drive to hunt down a gang of brutal killers. Upon finding them they are dismayed to learn that a companion of theirs is among them. Though he hasn't done anything terrible, he has nevertheless thrown in with them.

The Rangers capture them and, according to their code, must hang them. Their friend pleads for his life, saying, "I was just tryin' to get through the territory without being scalped."

Though they don't doubt it, he has nevertheless crossed the line, and their remark to him is, "you ride with an outlaw, you die with an outlaw."

Are you - and I'm now speaking spiritually - riding with an outlaw? The devil is the outlaw god of this world and nonbelievers are said to be his witting or unwitting captives and conspirators.

God isn't a Ranger; He's your Redeemer. The really good news is that even though we are all born outlaws, riding with the devil, there is hope. A person can repent and receive Jesus Christ and, as the Redeemer, He delivers them from sin and death to live with Him forever.

What if a person doesn't repent? Then the Redeemer is required to act as a destroyer. You will be left in your sin and die an eternal death with the devil and his fallen angels when they and all nonbelievers are cast alive into Hell at the end of the age.

Our passage highlights the role of God as Redeemer. God is called the Redeemer in verse thirty-four. In His role as Redeemer He would deliver the Jews in response to their repentance, but He would destroy the Babylonians for their rebellion.

In addition to exploring these contrasts between believer and nonbeliever we can talk about believers and our ongoing need for repentance that releases God to work in and through our lives. You see, even though we've been redeemed, we are still being redeemed in the sense that "even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for... the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23) at the resurrection and rapture of the church.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Repentance Releases Your Redeemer To Act As A Deliverer, and #2 Rebellion Requires Your Redeemer To Act As A Destroyer.

## #1 Repentance Releases Your Redeemer To Act As A Deliverer

(v1-20)

The last few chapters of Jeremiah are dedicated to describing God's judgments against the nations that most affected His chosen people.

The Babylonian Empire gets the most ink. God had specifically raised them up to act as a discipliner of the Jews but then they grew proud and rebellious so God had to destroy them in turn.

The first section, verses one through twenty, are mostly about Israel's repentance and return to The Lord releasing Him to deliver them from the Babylonian captivity and exile to return to their land.

Jeremiah 50:1 The word that the LORD spoke against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

Jeremiah 50:2 "Declare among the nations, Proclaim, and set up a standard; Proclaim - do not conceal it - Say, 'Babylon is taken, Bel is shamed. Merodach is broken in pieces; Her idols are humiliated, Her images are broken in pieces.'

Jeremiah 50:3 For out of the north a nation comes up against her, Which shall make her land desolate, And no one shall dwell therein. They shall move, they shall depart, Both man and beast.

Think of how this sounded to the Jews who were in captivity and exile. God was going to topple Babylon and her gods while they - the Jews - would endure. Talk about hopeful.

Biblical hope is the certainty that God will keep His promises. Every last one of them. Find one and camp out on it until you see it come to pass.

Jeremiah 50:4 "In those days and in that time," says the LORD, "The children of Israel shall come, They and the children of Judah together; With continual weeping they shall come, And seek the LORD their God.

This verse leaps ahead past our own time to the ultimate, final restoration of both Israel and Judah at the Second Coming of Jesus. Not only would Judah endure through Babylon, Israel and Judah will see the fulfillment of all God's promises to them.

Jeremiah 50:5 They shall ask the way to Zion, With their faces toward it, saying, 'Come and let us join ourselves to the LORD In a perpetual covenant That will not be forgotten.'

Jeremiah 50:6 "My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray; They have turned them away on the mountains. They have gone from mountain to hill; They have forgotten their resting place.

Jeremiah 50:7 All who found them have devoured them; And their adversaries said, 'We have not offended, Because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, The LORD, the hope of their fathers.'

Jeremiah 50:8 "Move from the midst of Babylon, Go out of the land of the Chaldeans; And be like the rams before the flocks.

Adam Clarke commented, "the description that is here given of the state of this people, their feelings and their conduct, finely exhibit the state of real penitents, who are fervently seeking the salvation of their souls."

In Jeremiah's day The Lord used Babylon as a discipline to bring them to a heart of repentance so He could redeem them. In the future God will use the Great Tribulation as a discipline to bring the Jews to a heart of repentance so He can redeem them.

Jeremiah 50:9 For behold, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon An assembly of great nations from the north country, And they shall array themselves against her; From there she shall be captured. Their arrows shall be like those of an expert warrior; None shall return in vain.

Jeremiah 50:10 And Chaldea shall become plunder; All who plunder her shall be satisfied," says the LORD.

Jeremiah 50:11 "Because you were glad, because you rejoiced, You destroyers of My heritage, Because you have grown fat like a heifer threshing grain, And you bellow like bulls,

Jeremiah 50:12 Your mother shall be deeply ashamed; She who bore you shall be ashamed. Behold, the least of the nations shall be a wilderness, A dry land and a desert.

Jeremiah 50:13 Because of the wrath of the LORD She shall not be inhabited, But she shall be wholly desolate. Everyone who goes by Babylon shall be horrified And hiss at all her plagues.

Jeremiah 50:14 "Put yourselves in array against Babylon all around, All you who bend the bow; Shoot at her, spare no arrows, For she has sinned against the LORD.

Jeremiah 50:15 Shout against her all around; She has given her hand, Her foundations have fallen, Her walls are thrown down; For it is the vengeance of the LORD. Take vengeance on her. As she has done, so do to her.

Jeremiah 50:16 Cut off the sower from Babylon, And him who handles the sickle at harvest time. For fear of the oppressing sword Everyone shall turn to his own people, And everyone shall flee to his own land.

The reason for Babylon's destruction was they were "glad and... rejoiced" as they destroyed God's "heritage," referring to the Promised Land. He says plainly they had "sinned against The Lord."

God had raised Babylon up to serve Him but they became filled with pride. They could have conquered Judah with a humility in recognizing themselves as merely a tool in God's hand.

Jeremiah 50:17 "Israel is like scattered sheep; The lions have driven him away. First the king of Assyria devoured him; Now at last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has broken his bones."  
Jeremiah 50:18 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, As I have punished the king of Assyria.

Jeremiah 50:19 But I will bring back Israel to his home, And he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan; His soul shall be satisfied on Mount Ephraim and Gilead.

Jeremiah 50:20 In those days and in that time," says the LORD, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none; And the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; For I will pardon those whom I preserve.

These verses are rich in dual meanings. The Jews would indeed return to their land after the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon. They would, however, be scattered again - especially after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD.

But there they are in their ancient homeland today; and there they will remain through the Great Tribulation unto the coming of The Lord to them.

Very simply put: The Jews repented and it released God to act on their behalf as their Redeemer to deliver them from Babylon.

Many of you, along with countless millions of others, have the testimony that you were riding with the devil and held captive by sin and habits that you were unable to break free from. Then the Gospel was brought to you; your will was freed to choose and you received Jesus Christ.

When you repented, turning to God from sin, your Redeemer acted powerfully to deliver you. You were transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Old things passed away; all things became new.

Redemption, by the way, is a biblical term that encompasses past, present, and future aspects of your salvation. It has to do with both the soul and the body, with the present life as well as with future life. It has reference not only to the remission of sin's penalty and the removal of its guilt, but also to the conquering of the power of sin and to the final removal of the presence of sin from the body.

All this summed up in Second Corinthians 1:10, "who delivered us from so great a death [past tense], and does deliver us [present tense]; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us... [future tense]."

Concentrating on the present, we've been delivered from the power of sin by Jesus Christ's work on the Cross, but when we willfully yield to sin in rebellion to God, we come under its power again. It becomes a master over us. Repentance releases our Redeemer to deliver us again. And again. And again.

Is there something - anything - you need to repent of? Do it! Turn to God from it and let Him deliver you.

## #2 Rebellion Requires Your Redeemer To Act As A Destroyer

(v21-46)

Jeremiah's full attention turns to the downfall of Babylon.

Jeremiah 50:21 "Go up against the land of Merathaim, against it, And against the inhabitants of Pekod. Waste and utterly destroy them," says the LORD, "And do according to all that I have commanded you.

Jeremiah 50:22 A sound of battle is in the land, And of great destruction.

Jeremiah 50:23 How the hammer of the whole earth has been cut apart and broken! How Babylon has become a desolation among the nations! I have laid a snare for you;

Jeremiah 50:24 You have indeed been trapped, O Babylon, And you were not aware; You have been found and also caught, Because you have contended against the LORD.

Jeremiah 50:25 The LORD has opened His armory, And has brought out the weapons of His indignation; For this is the work of the Lord GOD of hosts In the land of the Chaldeans.

Jeremiah 50:26 Come against her from the farthest border; Open her storehouses; Cast her up as heaps of ruins, And destroy her utterly; Let nothing of her be left.



Jeremiah 50:27 Slay all her bulls, Let them go down to the slaughter. Woe to them! For their day has come, the time of their punishment.

Jeremiah 50:28 The voice of those who flee and escape from the land of Babylon Declares in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, The vengeance of His temple.

Jeremiah 50:29 "Call together the archers against Babylon. All you who bend the bow, encamp against it all around; Let none of them escape. Repay her according to her work; According to all she has done, do to her; For she has been proud against the LORD, Against the Holy One of Israel.

Jeremiah 50:30 Therefore her young men shall fall in the streets, And all her men of war shall be cut off in that day," says the LORD.

Jeremiah 50:31 "Behold, I am against you, O most haughty one!" says the Lord GOD of hosts; "For your day has come, The time that I will punish you.

Jeremiah 50:32 The most proud shall stumble and fall, And no one will raise him up; I will kindle a fire in his cities, And it will devour all around him."

Pride, pride, and more pride. If you want to get a handle on this you can read about King Nebuchadnezzar being humbled by God thinking that he was the one who was responsible for Babylon's position as a nation. God caused him to behave like a wild beast for a period of seven years. Nebuchadnezzar was brought to repentance; the rest of his nation was not.

Jeremiah 50:33 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "The children of Israel were oppressed, Along with the children of Judah; All who took them captive have held them fast; They have refused to let them go.

Jeremiah 50:34 Their Redeemer is strong; The LORD of hosts is His name. He will thoroughly plead their case, That He may give rest to the land, And disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.

As Redeemer He would deliver the Jews and destroy their enemies. Once they repented and God was for them, who could stand against them?

Jeremiah 50:35 "A sword is against the Chaldeans," says the LORD, "Against the inhabitants of Babylon, And against her princes and her wise men.

Jeremiah 50:36 A sword is against the soothsayers, and they will be fools. A sword is against her mighty men, and they will be dismayed.

Jeremiah 50:37 A sword is against their horses, Against their chariots, And against all the mixed peoples who are in her midst; And they will become like women. A sword is against her treasures, and they will be robbed.

Jeremiah 50:38 A drought is against her waters, and they will be dried up. For it is the land of carved images, And they are insane with their idols.

Jeremiah 50:39 "Therefore the wild desert beasts shall dwell there with the jackals, And the ostriches shall dwell in it. It shall be inhabited no more forever, Nor shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.

Jeremiah 50:40 As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah And their neighbors," says the LORD, "So no one shall reside there, Nor son of man dwell in it.

This prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. Babylon has been inhabited throughout her history and the government of Iraq has begun restoring some portions of the ancient city.

The prophecy about Babylon's complete ruin awaits a future fulfillment during the Tribulation period.

Jeremiah 50:41 "Behold, a people shall come from the north, And a great nation and many kings Shall be raised up from the ends of the earth.

Jeremiah 50:42 They shall hold the bow and the lance; They are cruel and shall not show mercy. Their voice shall roar like the sea; They shall ride on horses, Set in array, like a man for the battle, Against you, O daughter of Babylon.

Jeremiah 50:43 "The king of Babylon has heard the report about them, And his hands grow feeble; Anguish has taken hold of him, Pangs as of a woman in childbirth.

Jeremiah 50:44 "Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the floodplain of the Jordan Against the dwelling place of the strong; But I will make them suddenly run away from her. And who is a chosen man that I may appoint over her? For who is like Me? Who will arraign Me? And who is that shepherd Who will withstand Me?"

Jeremiah 50:45 Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD that He has taken against Babylon, And His purposes that He has proposed against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; Surely He will make their dwelling place desolate with them.

Jeremiah 50:46 At the noise of the taking of Babylon The earth trembles, And the cry is heard among the nations.

Daniel, taken captive to Babylon, would write of the succession of nations. Assyria... Babylon... Medo-Persia... Greece... Rome. All these rose and fell as prophesied.

He also was shown a revived Roman Empire in the last days - a final kingdom ruled by the devil and his antichrist before the coming of Jesus to establish His kingdom.

Meanwhile warfare rages - spiritual warfare, with real casualties in terms of human suffering. It troubles people that God would allow the level of sin, suffering and sadness we see in the world. I dare say it is the excuse many nonbelievers use to keep from really thinking about The Lord. It can be equally troubling to believers.

I mentioned we are engaged in spiritual warfare. Are you at all familiar with the military concept of acceptable losses? It is the number of anticipated casualties in any offensive. For example, the Normandy Invasion in World War 2 was crucial to ending the war. The Allied Forces knew there would be heavy casualties. In April and May 1944 the Allied air forces lost nearly 12,000 men and over 2,000 aircraft in operations which paved the way for D-Day.

The Allied casualties figures for D-Day have generally been estimated at 10,000, including 2500 dead. More recent painstaking research by the US National D-Day Memorial Foundation has achieved a more accurate - and much higher - figure for the Allied personnel who were killed on D-Day. So far they have verified 2499 American D-Day fatalities and 1915 from the other Allied nations, a total of 4414 dead (much higher than the traditional figure of 2500 dead).

The total German casualties on D-Day are not known, but are estimated as being between 4000 and 9000 men.

Over 425,000 Allied and German troops were killed, wounded or went missing during the Battle of Normandy. This figure includes over 209,000 Allied casualties, with nearly 37,000 dead amongst the ground forces and a further 16,714 deaths amongst the Allied air forces. The losses of the German forces during the Battle of Normandy can only be estimated. Roughly 200,000 German troops were killed or wounded.

Between 15,000 and 20,000 French civilians were killed, mainly as a result of Allied bombing.

The Allied commanders deemed these losses acceptable given the overall objective.

Yes, spiritual warfare still rages on the earth, and it will until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and beyond that to the end of the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth, when the devil will lead one, final, desperate rebellion.

Multiplied millions of souls will be saved during this time of spiritual warfare. That objective would certainly justify our present suffering as acceptable. God's longsuffering waits, not willing any should perish, but that all would come to eternal life.

In terms of our study, God wants to act as the Redeemer who delivers rather than destroys.

Illustrations always fail at some point. Comparing our spiritual warfare to military conflicts fails because we are never casualties in the warfare. We are conquerors - "more than conquerors" - as we engage the enemy in battle.

Romans 8:37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

Romans 8:39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are certainly unusual as soldiers. Listen to this description of our equipping and strategy:

2Corinthians 6:4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,

2Corinthians 6:5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

2Corinthians 6:6 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

Don't think of yourself, ever, as a acceptable casualty. We are God's accepted conquerors.

Yes, the battle rages, but it's a battle for souls. We know that our Redeemer lives to deliver. But He is coming to destroy and we have work to do until that day.